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THE QUEBEC GEOGRAPHICAL BOARD AND THE STANDARDIZATION  
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Paper submitted by the Government of Canada\*

The Geographical Board was first established by order-in council No. 1373 of 15 November 1912. Act No. 10, chapter 24, assented to on 14 February 1920, authorized the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to officially establish the Board, to nominate its members and assign it its powers and duties. After the Act had been assented to, the first ministerial decree, No. 574, was approved to this effect on 6 April 1920.

The Geographical Board, which is represented on the Executive Council by the Minister of Lands and Forests, is responsible for selecting official geographical names in Quebec. It checks whether place names are correct and in current usage. If necessary, it checks established usage in situ by an oral inquiry. It re-establishes names by spelling them according to the norms of the French language. In addition to information obtained from miscellaneous sources, the Board may be called upon to carry out supplementary research into certain geographical names, either by communicating in writing with the persons involved (indirect inquiry), or by appointing a representative to interview people on the spot (direct inquiry).

For the last few years the Board has stressed the need for very thorough inquiries into the forms used in both old and new documents and into traditional forms, which are among the most valuable of stable elements. In accordance with the provisions of the law, the Board's decisions are subject to the approval of the Minister and become operative after their publication in the Gazette officielle du Québec.

The most important requirement for a map is that it should faithfully represent the regions of which it is in some way a picture; for this it is

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necessary to give priority in cartographic papers and documents to names in current usage. A map would rapidly become incomprehensible if amendments or changes were made to geographical names having stable oral forms.

The rule that names in local usage should be recorded on maps is one that should be followed as closely as possible. By so doing, the Board hopes to eliminate any risk of error and of arbitrary establishment of names.

#### I. NAMES TO BE COLLECTED

It is necessary to distinguish between the names of inhabited places and those of natural topographical features. The former are better known, precisely because of the frequency with which they are used. The latter identify geographical features such as lakes, rivers, mountains, hills, capes and, in certain cases, artificial constructions, such as bridges, fly-overs, tunnels, viaducts, etc.

The documentation to be collected should relate to the following points in particular:

- (a) Names of localities, hamlets and towns, of rows and, in general, of groups of houses;
- (b) Orography: peaks, hills, rocks, dunes, etc.;
- (c) Hydrography: lakes, rivers, streams, bays, coves, falls, rapids, ponds, pools, marshes, etc.;
- (d) Woods, nurseries, gardens, parks, terraces, cross-roads (circuses), paths, etc.;
- (e) Public roads or thoroughfares with well-known names, bridges, dams, etc.;
- (f) A number of other small geographical features, such as coves, viewpoints, scenic attractions, etc.

#### II. NAMES OF MUNICIPALITIES

It is important, before the name of a municipality is definitively fixed, to consider the historical events associated with the place or region, the natural topographical details, and the possibility that there is already in existence a name given to some particular spot nearby. These basic points must not be overlooked during research and, in addition, one should avoid as far as possible:

- (a) The use of a name already found in the Repertoire géographique du Québec;
- (b) Names which are too long;
- (c) The use of the cardinal points;